

5 questions with... Sirpa Pietikäinen

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Opinion

"Think. At least try to."



Sirpa Pietikäinen | *Photo credit: European Parliament audiovisual*

1. Which person you have worked with has most inspired you in your career and how?

Ilkka Suominen, the former Chair of the National Coalition Party of Finland. He is a great friend and mentor from whom I have partly inherited a vision of a Europe with a strong social market economy, ecological sustainability and cross-border cooperation. He has taught me some valuable lessons in politics, leadership and determination. I admire Ilkka's integrity, and aim to emulate that in my own political and private life.

2. How would you describe your political/leadership style in three words?

Visionary - I want to see where we are going and to help to define that direction, and make sure that we arrive there safely. Holistic - in politics, as it is with most things, it is often quite crucial to see the connections between different parts and their relationship to the whole. Participatory - you always get the most out of people when you give them a chance to shine.

3. What one item would you save from your house or apartment if it was on fire?

My family roots from my father's side are from the town of Vyborg in the eastern Karelia region, an area which Finland ceded to the Soviet Union after the Winter War of 1939-40. Only a few objects, which my father's grandmother managed to grab and take with her as they fled their home, survive: a modest flower vase, two photographs, and a chopping board made out of glass. I would save one of these objects as they symbolise my roots and my family's experience as immigrants. They also serve as a personal reminder of the importance of treating immigrants with empathy.

4. What do you do in your free time to relax and unwind?

I read, and I try to think. My motto is: "Think. At least try to."

5. What was the most inspirational and influential book you have read and why?

'Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge', by Edward O. Wilson. This book had a big impact on my thinking by arguing that all sciences, humanities and arts, as fragmented as they are today, can be synthesised under one umbrella of 'consilience'. According to Wilson, all of these different branches of what we call 'knowledge' have the same common goal: to give understanding a purpose. The book provides an excellent overview of humanity through the ages and of our place in the world.

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